

**Sierra Nevada Conservancy Grant Program  
Safe Drinking Water, Water Quality and Supply, Flood Control,  
River and Coastal Protection Act of 2006 (Proposition 84)**

**Subregion:** CENTRAL **County:** NEVADA

**Applicant:** NEVADA COUNTY FIRES SAFE COUNCIL

**Project Title:** NEVADA COUNTY FIRST DEFENSIBLE SPACE RECOGNITION & HOME TOUR

**Reference Number:** SNC 070128

**PROJECT SCOPE**

This project would identify and document prime examples of private land wildfire defensible space efforts around residential properties in various vegetation types and create a Home Tour of these sites to illustrate to other property owners how they can better protect their properties from possible wildfire and protect adjacent wild lands from potential ignition from private land sources. Specific actions include:

- Assemble a volunteer force to consist of resource technicians and professional landscape architects;
- Develop home selection criteria for 8 homes to be included on the tour;
- Develop and print Home Tour guide with pictures of the home sites and directions for tour;
- Initiate media ads to announce home tour;
- Provide handouts with information on defensible space guidelines, fire-wise plant guide for Nevada County, and professional assistance referral list for each home site;
- Present awards to selected homeowners; appreciation and recognition at completion of tour day.

**PROJECT SCHEDULE**

<b>DETAILED PROJECT DELIVERABLES</b>	<b>TIMELINE</b>
Tour development, including site identification and logistics	May 2008
Homeowner awards	May 2009
Advertising	January 2009
Guides	April 2009
Promotion and coordination	May 2008 – January 2009
Conduct Home Tour	May 2009
<b>Final Report/Final Payment Request</b>	<b>May 2009</b>

**PROJECT COSTS**

<b>PROJECT BUDGET CATEGORIES</b>	<b>TOTAL SNC FUNDING</b>
Coordination of selection committee, home selection criteria	\$1,000
Home site inspections	\$1,000
Advertising, signage and printed guides	\$15,450
Administration	\$550
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>	<b>\$18,000</b>

**Letters of Support:**

- Nevada County Forest Integrated Resource Safety Task Force (FIRST)

**Recommendation:**

Staff recommendation is to fund this project at the requested level of \$18,000.

## A. Land and Water Benefits

The watershed correlation would be the relationship of disastrous fire with associated structure loss/damage to the baking of the soil immediately below the lost structure and around the immediate area thus causing soil erosion and the subsequent destruction of water quality and of water delivery systems, due to the potential runoff of household items such as; paint, pesticides, cleaners, oil, plastics, and petroleum products that could have a detrimental effect on the watershed if allowed to wash into a water source. By reducing the fuel loading on private lands and homes the reduction of risk is tremendous as structures provide another component of fuel loading, that once ignited add additional and significant intensity to the fire and require additional protection resources that can divert these resources from the wildland fire suppression effort thus allowing the wildland fire to become larger and more damaging to natural resources and the watershed. Since the late 1970's, development of homes in the wildland has increased in Nevada County. By completing defensible space/ fuel reduction requirements around structures and associated landscapes the risks from fire can be significantly reduced thereby providing protection to private property and the associated watershed. In addition by meeting defensible space requirements less fire protection equipment and personnel would be needed for structure protection allowing more suppression force to deal with the wildfire. The US Forest Service is currently experimenting with Strategic Land Area Treatments (SPLATs), which are designed to change wildfire behavior across the landscape. Wildfire behavior computer models have shown this tactic to be extremely effective at reducing the rate of spread and overall effects of fire. Creating defensible space around homes embedded throughout the watersheds would mimic this strategy and reap the potential benefits in a wildfire incident to reduce the effects of the fire.

Post disastrous fire effects in the Wildland Urban Interface Zone can produce household chemicals mixing with nutrient rich soil and create sediment with extraordinary levels of hazardous chemicals and household products, sometimes in excess of 50 times that of pre fire levels thus ruining fisheries, destroying water quality and greatly escalating the costs of rehabilitation of the water supply system and the watershed.

Investment in this type of resident/landowner education has long term benefits. Once clear understanding is achieved, that individual can implement and maintain their property to effective defensible space standards which serve to protect the watershed from catastrophic wildfire. Additional benefit is derived from the ripple effect of these individuals passing the knowledge along to their families, neighbors and associates who trust this credible source of information and first hand knowledge of the condition.

This project provides the following Land and Water benefits:

1. Protection of the watersheds from catastrophic wildfire through education and understanding of the implementation of Public Resource Code 4291.
2. Avoid the potential for erosion into the watershed from the removal of all vegetative material within 100 feet of structures.
3. Avoid the potential for toxic chemicals to be released into the watershed through the education of effective defensible space concepts around homes, which have proven to decrease structure ignition and losses.
4. Decrease the amount of water used for landscape irrigation through education of the use of native plants and fire wise landscape materials which utilize less water resource.
5. Increase the ability of fire suppression to contain fires through the implementation of defensible space.

## B. SNC Program Goals